



Tri-Party Agreement

HANFORD UPDATE

A bulletin on Hanford cleanup and compliance

April 2000

The Department of Energy – Richland Operations Office and the Office of River Protection Preparing Fiscal Year 2002 Budget Requests

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Richland Operations Office and Office of River Protection are in the process of preparing separate budget requests for Fiscal Year 2002. As in prior years, DOE provides opportunities for public input in the development of the cleanup budgets.

A workshop was held with interested stakeholders to develop criteria for the Fiscal Year 2002 budget on February 10, 2000 in Portland, Oregon. Comments included:

Specific to the Richland Operations Office

- Concerns that there are budget shortfalls and that DOE is not asking for the right amount of money.
- The Richland Operations Office and the Office of River Protection should align their budget submission with the public's expectations.
- Tri-Party Agreement compliance milestones need to be met in future years.
- DOE needs to look at the big picture for cleanup of the 200 Area and determine how clean is clean and what budget requirements will be needed.
- Do not use cleanup dollars for the Fast Flux Test Facility or restart.

Specific to the Office of River Protection:

- This program lacks credibility without essential Tri-Party Agreement milestones.
- Concerns were expressed about tank farms and environmental compliance. There should be safety upgrades to protect employees and

compliance with environmental regulations.

- It looks like environmental compliance and other orders rank low on the priority list.

A half-day workshop was held in Richland, Washington, on March 15. More than 100 members of the public and interested stakeholders attended breakout sessions to discuss five specific programs: the Office of River Protection, Waste Management, Environmental Restoration, Facility Stabilization, and Spent Nuclear Fuel.

Public meetings were held in Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Oregon, to discuss the Integrated Priority Lists as well as other Hanford cleanup and compliance issues. The Seattle meeting was held on March 28 at the Seattle Center and the Portland meeting was held at the Portland State Office Building on March 30. The meetings were being held when the *Hanford Update* went to print, so information on the public meetings was not available for this issue.

The public comment period on the Fiscal Year 2002 Budget ended on March 31, 2000. Background material on the budget can be found on the Hanford homepage (www.hanford.gov/doe/budget00/request/index.htm). Both the Richland Operations Office and Office of River Protection Integrated Priority Lists can be found on the Hanford homepage under Tri-Party Agreement.

For more information, please contact Gail McClure, DOE-RL (509) 373-5647, or call the Hanford Cleanup toll-free line at 1-800-321-2008.

Calendar of Public Involvement Activities

April 11	9:00 a.m. to 4:00 pm	Environmental Restoration Committee Meeting Room 1077, PNNL's EMSL Building, 3335 Q Street, Richland
April 12	9:00 a.m. to 4:00 pm	Health, Safety and Waste Management Meeting Room 142, Federal Building, 825 Jadwin Avenue, Richland
April 13	9:00 a.m. to 4:00 pm	Dollars and Sense Committee Meeting Room 142, Federal Building, 825 Jadwin Avenue, Richland

EPA Issues \$55K in Penalties to Department of Energy

The northwest regional office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has assessed stipulated penalties totaling \$55,000 against the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) for violations of the Tri-Party Agreement's Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) requirements. The violations involved poor waste management practices at the 221-U uranium separation facility (U-Plant), one of five former chemical processing facilities in the 200 Area of Hanford.

In a letter dated March 6, 2000, EPA indicated it is assessing stipulated penalties of \$50,000 against DOE for failure to have an approved Waste Control Plan (WCP) prior to the generation of "investigation-derived" waste (IDW) this includes personal protective gear, sampling equipment, and other wastes created during a CERCLA investigation — and a one-time penalty of \$5,000 for failure to sample the waste before its disposal.

Both penalties address violations of the Sampling and Analysis Plan (SAP) that was agreed upon under the Tri-Party Agreement. The waste was discovered September 16, 1999, during a Washington State Department of Ecology inspection of a 90-day waste accumulation area. EPA is concerned that the violations indicate that DOE had inadequate understanding of what wastes were generated by characterization activities at the former uranium separation facility.

Director of Environmental Cleanup for EPA Region 10, Michael Gearheard said, "The Tri-Party Agreement is pretty clear on DOE's responsibilities to follow basic waste management practices. Continued missteps at the country's most toxic site cannot and will not be tolerated." EPA continues to investigate waste management at Hanford.

For more information, please contact Doug Sherwood, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 509-376-9529.

DOE Investigates High Tritium Levels In Hanford Well

The U.S. Department of Energy is working closely with Bechtel Hanford, Inc. and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory to obtain additional information about a groundwater sample taken a few miles from the Columbia River showing tritium levels in excess of 8 million picocuries per liter (pCi/L).

The sample was taken January 27, 2000, from well 699-13-3A next to an old Hanford radioactive waste burial site. In January 1999, a sample from the same well showed tritium levels of 1.8 million pCi/L. The January 1999 sample was the first ever taken for tritium from that well. The sample point is along the northwest edge of the Energy Northwest reactor complex about 3.6 miles from the Columbia River and about 10 miles from the city of Richland.

Since learning of the preliminary sample levels on January 28, 2000, DOE and its contractors have developed a sampling plan to obtain information on tritium levels from other wells in the area. Results from the groundwater analysis, completed in mid February, did not show elevated tritium levels in groundwater at other wells in the area.

"Although these readings appear to be localized to a single well in this area, we're still concerned about the high concentrations of tritium," said Mike Thompson, DOE Acting Program Manager of the Groundwater/Vadose Zone Project. "We will

continue moving quickly to confirm the source of this tritium, determine how fast and in what direction it is moving."

Well 699-13-3A was sampled along with 21 other wells during the weeks of February 7 and 14. Results indicated continued high concentrations of tritium in 699-13-3A, while the other wells were consistent with tritium values expected or already known from the existing plume beneath the Hanford Site. Values found in the other wells during this sampling ranged from below detection to 55,000 pCi/L. Well 699-13-3A still indicated a tritium level at approximately eight million pCi/L.

"I am pleased with the speed with which our team developed and acted on a sampling plan," said Thompson. "We had good cooperation from the Environmental Protection Agency, Washington State Departments of Ecology and Health, Energy Northwest, city of Richland and the stakeholder community."

Although the high concentrations to tritium appear to be localized to an area adjacent to the 618-11 burial ground, DOE and its contractors will work quickly to identify the size, direction, concentration and source of this tritium plume. When more information is obtained from additional testing, the potential impact of this tritium plume on the environment can be better determined.

Transfer Line Leaks Radioactive Waste

Hanford radioactive tank waste leaked into an electrical box from an underground conduit pipe January 6 during pumping of Tank S-103 in the 200 Area. An estimated 2 to 5 gallons of liquid seeped to the ground.

CH2M HILL Hanford Group, Inc. is the Office of River Protection contractor responsible for maintenance and operation of the aging underground storage tanks. Workers completed decontamination efforts at the site by 6 p.m. the same day. Radiation surveys conducted after the contaminated soil and equipment were removed from the area were consistent with normal background levels. The contaminated soil was removed and disposed of properly.

Pumping of waste from single-shell tanks to safer double-shell tanks is ongoing at Hanford and is overseen by the DOE's Office of River Protection. There are currently 149 single-shell tanks and on average 30 years beyond their design life. Fran DeLozier, CH2M HILL President and General Manager, said, "Although this incident was handled well by the workers in the farm, it reinforces the continuing need to upgrade the aging equipment and to retrieve and treat the waste."

"This event stands as a reminder that the only permanent solution to cleaning up the Site is to treat and immobilize the tank waste," said Dick French, Office of River Protection Manager.

Public Hearings held on Idaho Environmental Impact Statement

Public hearings were held by the U.S. Department of Energy Idaho Operations Office on the *Idaho High Level Waste and Facilities Disposition Draft : Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)* to discuss proposed alternatives on waste treatment. The EIS analyzes the potential impacts to human health and the environment from two sets of alternatives. The first is treating high-level waste, either offsite or onsite, and liquid mixed transuranic waste to a form suitable for disposal. One waste treatment alternative includes treatment of the high-level waste at the Hanford Site in the proposed vitrification plant, then returning the waste to Idaho for disposition. The

second alternative is to close associated waste management facilities.

A hearing was held in Portland on February 22 with approximately five citizens in attendance. On February 24, a hearing was held in the Tri-Cities with approximately ten citizens in attendance. The public comment period for the draft EIS (January 20 through March 20) has been extended through April 19. For more information, please call 1-888-918-5100, or send written comments to Thomas L. Wichmann, Document Manager, DOE, Idaho Operations Office, 850 Energy Drive, MS 1108, Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401-1563, or sent electronically at <http://www.jason.com/hlwfeis>.

Former U.S. Senate Staffer To Lead New DOE-RL Office

DOE-RL recently announced the selection of Marla K. Marvin to head its newly formed Office of Intergovernmental, Public, and Institutional Affairs. Marvin will report directly to DOE-RL Manager Keith Klein.

As Director of the new office (formerly the Office of External Affairs), Marvin will be a senior counselor to Klein and the DOE-RL management team. With special emphasis on the legal and legislative issues surrounding Hanford cleanup, she will direct and manage DOE-RL's institutional relations, media relations, intergovernmental affairs, legislative and congressional affairs, public involvement, tribal interactions, and general public and community outreach activities.

"I have retooled this office to ensure that our intergovernmental and public affairs strategies will be guided by an expert understanding of the legal drivers for cleanup," said DOE-RL Manager Keith A. Klein. "The Hanford workscope is greatly influenced by the Tri-Party Agreement, environmental laws, land use regulations and other legal requirements. A detailed understanding of these drivers is an integral part of managing Hanford's external interfaces and must be the starting point for our communication development."

Marvin spent more than eight years as a senior congressional staffer — first as Legislative Assistant to U.S. Representative Jolene Unsoeld, and then as Legislative Director and Staff Counsel to U.S. Senator Patty Murray of Washington. She also served as an Assistant Attorney General in Washington State.

Getting Involved in Hanford Cleanup

By Susan Leckband

Hanford Advisory Board Non-Union/Non-Management
Workforce representative

Yesterday

I was luckier than most kids growing up in the 50s and 60s. My mother instilled some fundamental ideas in me without me realizing it. She believed that reading was one of the cornerstones of life and curiosity was a good thing. When you feel passionate about something get off your duff and get involved. We lived in a mostly blue-collar neighborhood, in a midwestern city of about 80,000. Like many other such cities we were blessed with several small libraries originally funded by Andrew Carnegie. Mother loved reading and our neighborhood library was well used by our family. The library represented the first line of education to her. When the cost of maintaining these libraries became prohibitive to shrinking city budgets they were closed. Mother forged an unlikely alliance, with people she didn't know, to mount a campaign to save our library. I witnessed a valiant battle, hard-fought by people from all walks of life who had a common goal. Although they ultimately lost the battle to save our library I was inspired by their dedication and from those days forward I have been interested and involved in various organizations and causes. I believe in getting involved and have been rewarded by meeting some extraordinary people outside my usual work or social sphere. Beginning as a volunteer candystriper when I was a teen, I have participated in various school events and fundraisers with my children and now I am privileged to be a part of the Hanford Advisory Board.

Today

I have learned so much from my participation on the board. I joined the board with some preconceived notions but had my eyes opened in a very short time. Luckily, I had a "honeymoon" period being an alternate for 2 years before being appointed primary board member. This time allowed me to become involved with some committees and really get to know how the board worked. The past 3 years also provided me with a wide spectrum of ideas and

reminded me to respect the power of people working together for a common cause. There are many varied interests and stakeholder groups represented on the board. It is a testimony to their commitment to worker safety, human health and the environment that drives the members to negotiate in order to provide consensus advice to the regulating agencies. One thing I believe we all agree on is that there can be no compromise to worker safety. As a workforce representative I try to determine how each policy advice we issue will affect the Hanford employee and how I can most effectively represent them. That's my job on the board and I take it seriously.

Tomorrow

My respect for the hundreds of people who go to work in the middle of the desert each day will continue to rise. These Hanford employees will still be the first line of defense in our monumental clean up battle. Some days they have to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds to move forward. Governmental agency policy revamping, continuing contractor change, funding uncertainties, regulatory change, and constant reorganization are just a few of the issues they face daily and yet they make significant progress toward cleanup. We have to define success for the Hanford Site. We must continue to value the dedication of the Hanford worker as the foundation on which that success will be built. The environmental and human issues will exist on the Hanford site for decades to come. We must recognize that people not only work at Hanford, their children, their grandchildren, and many future generations will live and work in close proximity to the site. Hopefully, we can continue to draw on the experience of current employees and engage younger generations in finding solutions to the cleanup issues. I believe there are viable solutions and am confident that Hanford employees have the talent and dedication to implement those solutions. We have an obligation to continue the struggle for Hanford cleanup progress for ourselves, the northwest region, and the nation. I'll try to do my part and I challenge others to do theirs in this compelling battle.



HANFORD UPDATE

Tank Waste Treatment "Road Show" Wraps Up Pilot Program

A pilot outreach effort, dedicated to providing balanced information on Hanford's high-level radioactive tank waste, completed a three-city "tour" in February. Recommendations from a public involvement steering group propelled the agencies to test creative and valuable public outreach techniques.

The pilot program included visits to three communities – one small, one medium and one large – to share information and answer questions regarding tank waste treatment. The goal was to increase public awareness of Hanford's aging radioactive waste tanks. Informational materials and briefings discussed the importance of a Hanford tank waste treatment facility to protect the Columbia River.

The road show pilot program consisted of several activities: a presentation to one or more community civic groups; a focus group session with community leaders and elected officials; and an "open house" for the general public. Most recently, this approach took presenters and display materials to more than 250 members of the public in the Vancouver, Washington community.

The two additional communities visited by Ecology, BNFL Inc. and the DOE Office of River Protection were Hermiston, Oregon, and Spokane, Washington, between November 1999 and February 2000. The next steps the agencies will take include an evaluation of the pilot program, refining the materials based on feedback from participants, and sharing the results with members of the public involvement steering group.

Historical Note: The U.S. Department of Energy manages the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington State. Hanford was established during World War II as part of the top secret Manhattan Project to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons. Weapons material production was halted in the late 1980s. The Hanford Site is now engaged in the world's largest cleanup effort to deal with the legacy of radioactive and hazardous wastes that resulted from the plutonium production era. Hanford's cleanup program is regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology under a long term compliance contract called the Tri-Party Agreement. This agreement sets the framework and timelines on the cleanup work so that Hanford meets current environmental standards.

Hanford Update
Department of Energy
P.O. 550 MSIN A7-75
Richland WA, 99352